The acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER

The role of background language(s)*

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The acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER: the role of background language(s)

Sanne Berends  Petra Sleeman  Aafke Hulk  Jeannette Schaeffer

Introduction

This study looks at transfer from L1 French and L1 English to the L2 Dutch. We specifically look at the ability to judge and imitate morphosyntactic and semantic structures with the quantitative pronoun ER.

Materials

- Grammaticality Judgement Task
- 3 experimental conditions (N=30), 15 fillers
- Sentence Imitation Task
- 3 experimental conditions (N=12), 8 fillers
- Dutch Vocabulary Task, Digit Span, Questionnaire

Participants

L1 French (N=25), highly advanced, level > B2
L1 English (N=25), highly advanced, level > B2
L1 Dutch (N=25)

Average years of exposure: L1 French (22;1), L1 English (19;7)

Comparison results French-Dutch and English-Dutch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>L1 French</th>
<th>L1 English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>(presence)</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>p = 0.00856 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(absence)</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>p = 0.000294 ***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Semantics | (indefiniteness) | positive | p = 2.18e-05 *** | negative | p = 3.83e-09 *** |
|           | (definiteness)    | negative | p = 0.08448      | positive | p = 0.16154    |

Comparison results French-English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>L1 French</th>
<th>L1 English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Syntax</td>
<td>(presence)</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>p = 0.0691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(absence)</td>
<td>positive</td>
<td>p = 0.05478 .</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Semantics | (indefiniteness) | positive | p = 0.263 | negative | p = 0.3198 |
|           | (definiteness)    | negative | p = 0.36 | positive | p = 0.89    |

| Semantics | (non-presuppositionality) | positive | p = 0.87 | negative | p = 0.52 |
|           | (presuppositionality)    | negative | p = 0.015 * | positive | p = 0.232 |

In the SI the L1 French speakers behaved as we expected, however the L1 French speakers did not; apparently they behave just like the L1 English speakers.

In the GJT the L1 French seems to have an influence on L2 Dutch, like we expected, BUT a comparison between the L1 French and the L1 English speakers also shows that the L2 French speakers behave exactly the same as the L1 English speakers.

Discussion

- Our predictions were based on Dutch being the L2 for both groups. However, all of the L1 French participants speak English too, and since all participants live in The Netherlands they come into contact with English on a regular basis. This leads to the idea that Dutch is in fact their L3.

Conclusion

Our goal was to look at the role of L1 French and L1 English on the L2 acquisition of the Dutch quantitative pronoun ER. However, we found that for the L1 English group Dutch is considered the ‘real L2’, and for the L1 French group English should be considered the L2 and Dutch the L3, thereby confirming the L2 Status Factor.

References and Acknowledgements


We would like to thank Tom Rooper and Jason Rothman for their useful comments and discussion on this research.